

**Preliminary Amendment of U.S. National Stage for International Application  
PCT/EP2003/013563 Filed December 2, 2003**

**In the Specification:**

Please amend the English language translation submitted herewith of instant Specification, without prejudice, as follows:

Please delete all text above line 13 of page 1, including the heading "Prior Art" and replace the deleted matter with the following new section headings and title of the invention:

**--TITLE OF THE INVENTION**

**Method for Producing Linear or Branched Fatty Acid Esters by Means of Heterogeneously  
Catalyzed Reactive Rectification with an Upstream Reactor**

**CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS**

This application claims priority under 35 USC § 365 from International Application PCT/EP2003/013563, filed on December 2, 2003, which claims priority from German Application No. 102 57 525.8, filed on December 10, 2002.

**BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**

**Technical Field**

This invention relates to a countercurrent process for the continuous esterification of C<sub>1-22</sub> (fatty) acids with C<sub>1-10</sub> monoalkanols, C<sub>2-5</sub> di- or trialkanols or mixtures thereof in the liquid phase in the presence of heterogeneous catalysts.

**Background Art--**

At page 3, between lines 4 and 5 thereof, please insert the following new section headings and new paragraph:

**--BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION**

This invention provides a countercurrent process for the continuous esterification of C<sub>1-22</sub> (fatty) acids with C<sub>1-10</sub> monoalkanols, C<sub>2-5</sub> di- or trialkanols or mixtures thereof in the

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liquid phase in the presence of heterogeneous catalysts in a preliminary reactor (1) and in a reaction column (3), characterized in that the reaction column (3) is preceded by the preliminary reactor (1) and a separation unit (2) for the purpose of reducing the viscosity of the reaction mixture and removing the water of reaction from the system via a separation unit (2) to displace the reaction equilibrium before the reaction column (3).--

At page 3, line 14 thereof, please delete the section heading "Description of the Invention", and insert the following new section headings and new paragraph:

**--BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWING**

The process according to the invention is described with reference to the accompanying drawing (Fig. 1) which illustrates a preferred installation. However, this is not intended to limit the invention in any way. Shown in Fig. 1 are the preliminary reactor (1), the water separator (separation unit) (2), the reaction column (3) with a plurality of bubble plates surmounted by a rectifying section (4), and a further separator (5). Also shown in Fig. 1 are the input and output flows to these installation parts. Both the preliminary reactor (1) and the rectification column (3) are filled with catalyst.

**DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION--**

At page 12, line 1, please delete "**CLAIMS**", and replace it with:

--What is claimed is:--.

On a separate, new page 14, please add the following new section heading and paragraph containing an Abstract of the Disclosure: